United Nations E/CN.5/2004/L.9

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: Limited
20 February 2004

Original: English

Commission for Social Development
Forty-second session
4-13 February 2004
Agenda item 3 (a)
Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: improving public-sector effectiveness

Draft agreed conclusions submitted by the Vice-Chairperson of the Commission, Ivana Grollová (Czech Republic), on the basis of informal consultations

The Commission for Social recommends to the Economic and Social Council the adoption of the following text:

Agreed conclusions on improving public-sector effectiveness

The Economic and Social Council,

Endorses the following agreed conclusions adopted by the Commission for Social Development with respect to its priority theme at its forty-second session:

1. Governments have the primary responsibility for the provision of social services in order to enhance social development and to contribute to the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development[1] and the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development,[2] the outcome document adopted at the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly,[3] entitled World Summit for Social Development and Beyond: Achieving Social Development for All in a Globalizing World, and the Millennium Declaration.[4] In this regard, national priorities and policies have the leading role in the development process. At the same time, national efforts need to be supported by an enabling international environment. The Commission emphasizes the crucial role of the

[1] *Report of the World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, 6-12 March 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.8), chap. I, resolution 1, annex I.
[2] Ibid., annex II.
[3] General Assembly resolution S-24/2, annex.
[4] General Assembly resolution 55/2.

04-24666 (E) 230204

public sector in, inter alia, the provision of equitable, adequate and accessible social services for all to meet the essential needs of the entire population, in particular those excluded from social services and those most in need. Governments should constantly strive to improve the public sector, taking into account the level of economic and social development of each country.

2. The Commission reiterates that sound social and economic development policies at the national and international levels should be part of the framework for the improvement of the effectiveness of the public sector. This requires long-term planning, well defined priorities and coherent policies, effective implementation and capacity-building. Those policies should be formulated and implemented by Governments, with the participation of all relevant stakeholders, as appropriate, and should be supported by the international community.

3. The Commission acknowledges that improvement of public sector effectiveness can be achieved through, inter alia, dialogue, partnership and cooperation at all levels. The Commission encourages Governments to strengthen the exchanges of experience and methods of effective delivery of public services. The United Nations system and international financial, trade and economic institutions and bilateral donors are invited to play an important role, through an integrated and coherent approach, in assisting Governments, in particular those in developing countries, least developed countries and countries with economies in transition, in this endeavour, specifically in exchanging and disseminating good practices and capacity-building activities aimed at improving public sector effectiveness.

4. The Commission acknowledges that developing countries, in particular the least developed countries, need to have a sufficient level of financial resources in order to provide social services commensurate with the needs of their citizens.

5. The Commission recognizes that a substantial increase in official development assistance and other resources will be required if developing countries are to achieve the internationally agreed development goals and objectives, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration. In order to build support for official development assistance, heads of State and Government have pledged to further improve policies and development strategies, both nationally and internationally, to enhance aid effectiveness.

6. Achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, demands a new partnership between developed and developing countries. In this context, the Commission stresses the importance of the commitment recently made by heads of State and Government to achieving sound policies, good governance at all levels and the rule of law, as well as to mobilizing domestic resources, attracting international flows, promoting international trade as an engine for development, increasing international financial and technical cooperation for development, sustainable debt financing and external debt relief and enhancing the coherence and consistency of the international monetary, financial and trading systems.

7. Each country has the primary responsibility for its own economic and social development, within which the role of national policies and development strategies cannot be overemphasized. In this context, the Commission reaffirms that international cooperation has an essential role in assisting developing countries,

including the least developed countries, in the strengthening of their human, institutional and technological capacity and that the improvement of the effectiveness of the public sector is one of the conditions for social development requiring strengthened international cooperation.

8. The Commission stresses that in making recommendations on macroeconomic policies and implementing various programmes related to development and poverty eradication, the international financial institutions are invited to take full account of the role and specificity of the public sector, notably public social services.

9. At the international level, the Commission has the primary responsibility in the follow-up to and review of the implementation of the commitments made at the World Summit for Social Development[1,2] and the further initiatives agreed upon at the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly.[3] In this regard, the Commission is a forum where countries can participate in an exchange of views and assessment of efforts, including through best practices aimed, inter alia, at promoting public sector effectiveness and seeking optimal ways of ensuring equitable delivery of social services in order to enhance social cohesion and accelerate social development.

10. The Commission recommends that, when making decisions about allocation of public resources, Governments, with the contribution of relevant stakeholders, should consider the social development goals when developing or strengthening, inter alia, their national poverty eradication policies and strategies, taking into account that the financing of effective social services is an investment in economic growth and should be evaluated in the context of their impact on social development goals as well as on public expenditures and finances.

11. The Commission, while noting that economic hardship has in some cases led to reduced public social expenditures, recognizes that social and economic development policies and programmes should be complementary and that effective spending in strengthening public social services, including human capital development, social equity enhancement and social protection, contributes to long-term economic development and the development of society as a whole.

12. The Commission invites Governments to consider complementary and alternative approaches to the delivery of social services, including decentralization, privatization and public-private partnerships or, where appropriate, the introduction of competitive market-based structures. In general, social services can be delivered most effectively and efficiently by entities that are most appropriate and closest to local communities and are therefore more aware of their needs. While services can be provided by private entities, the fundamental objectives of those services and the ultimate responsibility of the State remain unchanged. The Commission reaffirms that any reform of public service delivery should aim at promoting and attaining the goals of universal and equitable access to those services by all, without discrimination, and at eradicating poverty, promotion and protection of all human rights, promoting full and productive employment and fostering social integration. In this regard, factors such as the rule of law, good governance, sound financial management at all levels, gender equality and strengthened international cooperation are important elements for success in meeting these objectives.

13. The Commission underlines that improvement of public sector effectiveness requires, inter alia, that all countries strive to eliminate corruption at all levels and welcomes the adoption by the General Assembly of the United Nations Convention against Corruption.

14. The Commission emphasizes the importance of dialogue and inclusive stakeholder participation, as appropriate, in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of social development policies, including policies on social services, to increase efficiency, effectiveness, accessibility, affordability and flexibility of such services and the importance of the sense of ownership among all relevant stakeholders, including civil society, as well as entities that provide social services.

15. The Commission underscores the importance of the principles of transparency, accountability, integrity, efficiency and equality for improving the effectiveness of the public sector. Also, the Commission considers that when Governments address the monitoring and evaluation of the delivery and impact of social services, the equitable access to and quality of such services as well as the attainment of their initial objectives should be taken into account.